

# **NCHRP 17-18 (016) CASE STUDIES PROJECT**

## **Creating a Culture of Traffic Safety - Four Successful States**

### **1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Case Study reports have been completed by the Mercer Consulting Group LLC on four States (Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota and Washington). The studies identify the key factors which have resulted in the States' success in reducing fatalities and fatality rates. The reports were prepared on the basis of in-person interviews and a review of background material.

### **2. PRODUCTS**

Each Case Study provides a data chart with an overview of the State's crash, fatality, injury and fatality rate statistics. Key public policy initiatives are identified by the year of their enactment and compared to the State's fatality rate. The Findings summarize the historical development of the State's safety program focusing on leadership, behavioral and engineering strategies, data systems, legislation, champions, partnerships and the role of the strategic highway safety plan. In the Conclusion an attempt is made to identify the key lesson learned by the State which may be of most benefit to others attempting to improve their own safety success. A Summary of the Critical Success Factors is provided at the end of the report as well as an Epilogue which lists the potential threats to continuation of the State's success. A list of Sources, Interviewees and the Case Study Questions are provided.

In addition to the reports, a Power Point presentation for each State has been prepared which summarizes the key aspects of their Case Study. An Executive Summary Power Point presentation has also been prepared which provides an overview of the total project and identifies similarities as well as key differences which were found among the four State programs.

### **3. RESULTS**

Three of the States (Iowa, Michigan and Washington) have a long history of safety focus and a steadily improving traffic safety record over a lengthy time period. In Minnesota the significant change in safety success has taken place more recently. In all cases several commonalities were determined.

- All States have achieved goals that have surpassed the national record
- Every State has a cooperative program characterized by collaboration and coordination through some form of organizing entity
- Individual leaders have emerged in each State to champion the program
- The widespread availability of accessible and highly developed data collection and analysis systems are a priority in every State
- Key partnerships have been developed at the State, local and Federal level
- Although there are some organizational variations, there are many more similarities in the strategies and activities conducted by the States including:
  - ✓ Aggressive goal setting
  - ✓ Prioritized engineering strategies
  - ✓ Comprehensive behavioral programs
  - ✓ Reliance on data-driven planning and programming
- Federal funding has provided support for technical resources and solutions
- Collaboration has been encouraged by the Federal agencies through the Safety Conscious Planning initiative and Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) mandate

### **4. POTENTIAL SAFETY PROGRAM THREATS**

The Case Study States are very cognizant of the fragile nature of their success and its dependence on the continuation of some key factors as well as the ability to weather challenges. Several common threats to future success were identified:

- Funding reductions
- Evolving crash characteristics
- Weakening of legislative culture
- Loss of champions
- Emerging complacency
- Changes in message delivery and media interest

## **5. FUTURE PROGRAM DIRECTION**

A number of commonalities were also identified when the States were asked to describe the factors which would be directing the immediate future of their safety program.

- Continuation of the SHSP process as the primary mechanism for engaging safety partners and achieving goals
- Insistence on the selection and funding only of data-driven, research-based strategies
- Support for further enhancement of data collection and analysis systems
- Identification of additional funding to support safety initiatives particularly at the local level
- Focus on ensuring an active advocacy program, often through the SHSP partners, which is directed at the highest government and political levels
- Renewal of efforts to retain and enact strong traffic safety laws

Prepared by:

Betty Mercer  
Mercer Consulting Group LLC  
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